Remnant: Fear Street Files

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There weren't many people Whtiley could consider a friend. However, after a discovery, he learns that one of his friends has gone missing, with a shady organization responsible for his disappearance and trying to cover up what he was trying to report. Now, Whitley finds himself trying to save his friend and finish his report on Fear Street and things that go bump in the night.

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Introduction

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The Atlas Kingdom

Whitley's Room

Ring

"Alright. That is currently the end of today's lessons. You performed subpar, Whitley. Do better next time. We shall meet again next week. Do the assigned homework in addition to reviewing chapters eighteen and nineteen." Cal Barna, the mathematics tutor that Jacques hired, said.

"I will." Whitely said in a monotone voice.

Nodding, Cal gathered his stuff before exiting the room in an annoyed posture, as if he couldn't believe he was resigned to this fate. Once his tutor was gone, Whitely sighed before rubbing his face in both aggravation and exhaustion. While he always had a knack for mathematics, especially because of one of his previous tutors, this tutor made the subject beyond stale and exasperating. Yet, Whitley knew he could not do anything about it. Not only was this necessary so he would have the knowledge to eventually run his father's business empire in the future, but his father made him do it in the first place. But more so, Whitley knew that despite being the *'favored'* child, Jacques rarely, if ever, listened to his desires or wants. So, he just had to put up with this.

'I just have to put up with Cal for another three weeks. Then, hopefully, the next one will be far better.' Whitley thought. *'I should probably start getting ready. Azure Brooks should be here soon for my statistics and probability lesson.'*

Knock Knock

"You may come in." Whitley said, straightening his posture just in case it was his... father. But to his relief and delight, it was the family's butler, Klein Sieben. Seeing one of the few people who cared for him entering his room caused Whitley to smile. "Hello, Klein."

"Hello, Master Whitley." Klein said, smiling, as he closed the door.

"It's good to see you, Klein." Whitley said. But he raised an eyebrow when he noticed that Klein was wearing his best suit and hat instead of his uniform. However, it was the suitcase that raised some concerns inside Whitley. "Are you heading somewhere, Klein?"

"You could say that, Master Whitley." Klein said as he sat down in a nearby chair.

"What's happening?"

"It has been a long time coming, Master Whitley, especially with how everything changed." Klein said. "Your father finally fired me."

"Really?" Whitley asked, only slightly in disbelief. But if he wasn't being honest with himself, he knew it was a long time coming. Whitley knew his father loathed Klein just as much as he did him. And Jacques was always looking for a way to get rid of him without causing a spectacle. But it seemed like he finally did. Yet, Whitley knew the reason without needing to be told. "It was because of my sister, Weiss Schnee."

"Primarily, yes. Jacques was not so keen on what I did. But as you already know, it has been a long time coming."

"Yes. I know. What will you do now?"

"Well. Despite having been the family's butler for a long time, I do have passions outside of it."

"What are they?"

"I always had a passion for things medical, even before becoming the family's butler. So, during my free time, I have been taking courses to get my degree, which I did. Recently, I got a job offer. And I am off to take the job."

"That makes sense, considering you always knew how to tend to injuries whenever we got hurt until a nurse or doctor arrived." Whitley said, remembering all the times Klein tended to him whenever he got hurt. "Where is the job?"

"It is in Vale."

"Vale!?" Whitley asked, surprised.

"Yes. Vale. I know it is surprising. But I need a change of scenery. Plus, there, I have a better chance of making a living without getting inconvenienced by some rich businessman looking to eliminate the competition."

"That is... true."

As much as Whitely does not like someone slandering his home kingdom, he is very well aware of how it is done here. Hell, Jazques was teaching him how to find loopholes and abuse them to his advantage to take out the competition. It was cruel, and every single person here was more than willing to destroy someone else's livelihood just to gain a foothold in the market. Yet, Whitley found it necessary as it was a do-or-die world out there. And if it meant ruining a few places, then so be it. He just did not want one of the few people who cared for him to get in the crossfire.

"Will we see you again?"

"In person, occasionally. While I don't have that many connections in Atlas, I still have you, your sisters, and your mother. I still want to see all of you in person from time to time." Klein assured. "But we will be in contact a lot."

"Good. Then, I wish you luck on your new life, Klein."

"Thank you, Whitley. And I wish you luck in your life and goals."

"Thank you, Klein. Now, if you will excuse me, I must get ready for my next tutoring session."

"Oh, speaking of sessions." Klein said as he stood up and grabbed his briefcase. "Azure Brooks called and said she would be unable to make it today."

'That's a relief. I could use my new free time to take a nap before starting my homework.' Whitley thought.

"However, she did drop off some stuff at the local library for you to review. She said that she wanted you to go over chapters thirty-four to forty but to skip the third section of each chapter as they are outdated."

'I should have seen that coming.' Whitley thought, annoyed. "Very well, thank you for telling me this, Klein. Is there anything else I need to know?"

"Yes. Your mother asked me to ask you if you could stop by the local liquor store and get her some Zinfandel for her. And to get the local paper from the store." Klein answered before sighing. "As you know by this point, get her some Brachetto d'Acqui, as it is weak, and she can no longer tell the difference. As for the paper, you also know the one."

"The one that has so many connections that nearly every businessman failed to shut it down for exposing them?"

"That's the one. Just be careful when you go there. I heard some are trying different tricks to shut it down."

"Alright. I will be careful. Thank you, Klein."

Nodding, Klein gave one last weak smile before exiting the room. Once he was gone, Whitley let out a heavy sigh. While he wasn't as close to Klein as his sisters were, he still saw him as a good friend, especially since he was one of the few people who treated him as a person rather than a tool. Aside from him and his sisters and mother, there was only one other person who ever cared for him.

'Nothing I can do now. I might as well just accept it.' Whitley thought as he grabbed his coat.

While he might have grown up in Atlas, that does not mean the cold never bothered him. He was just less susceptible to it than others. Looking over at the clock on the wall, Whitley saw that it was nearing 1600. While it was still relatively early, it would be better if he left now to avoid the crowds of people returning home from work. Additionally, while he could just have an employee get the stuff, Whitley felt like the cold air would wake him up from the boring lecture so he could better focus on his homework.

'Might as well head out now. Plus, I could possibly grab something on the way back.' Whitley thought as he zipped up his coat before leaving his room.

Two Hours Later

'I know Atlas is supposed to be the wealthiest kingdom, but these prices are ridiculous.' Whitley thought as he exited the wine store and headed to the corner store to get the newspaper his mother wanted.

Turning back around, Whitley shook his head at the ridiculously long line. Even though it wasn't the most popular wine store in Atlas, the line stretched around the block. What was supposed to be a ten-minute trip turned into nearly a one-hundred-minute annoyance. But at the very least, he got an extra-size bottle at a decent discount.

"Alright. Now I just need the newspaper, and then I can head home."

Keeping his eyes forward, Whitley seamlessly moved through the crowds of Atlesian people, soldiers, and Knights. Yet, he made sure to keep his distance from everyone, which they did in return. Despite being at the forefront of technology, Atlas still had a high crime rate, second only to that village in Mistral. And while some lien being stolen wouldn't be that big considering who he is, it would only lead to future hassles.

After another twenty minutes, Whitley arrived at the store. Nodding to the Atlesian Guards standing guard, he entered the store and headed straight to the back where the papers were. Grabbing two papers, Whitley maneuvered around some of the people there before heading to the cashier. But before he did, he made a slight detour to the drinks aisle. Reaching the refrigerated section, Whitley grabbed a glass bottle of AC/20. Strange names aside, it was his favorite drink. It had a fruity taste and left him feeling warm, as if he had drunk some nice hot chocolate despite not having any alcohol. He still remembered how one of his first tutors introduced it to him. However, his father forbade him from ever having any. Yet, despite the severe consequences that were assured to come, his old tutor still gave him some whenever he could. Sadly, his father eventually fired the goat faunus.

'I wonder how Carl Roig is doing. It has been a few years since we last spoke to each other before my father fired him.' Whitley thought as he went to the cashier.

"That will be forty-seven lien." The cashier said after scanning the items.

"Here you go." Whitley said as he paid the cashier.

Grabbing his stuff, Whitley exited the store and headed home. Thankfully, despite it being late, he could see the path easily as the street lamps lit up the place. However, because it was so late, it was far more packed than Whitley would have liked. Thankfully, there was an increase in security to prevent any 'accidents' or crime from happening.

'I wonder why mother always likes reading the physical paper. It would be far more efficient just to order a subscription online.' Whitley thought as he waited for the light to change at a crosswalk. But since this was one of the larger roads, the lights took a lot longer to change. Figuring he could pass the time with the paper, Whitley took it out of the bag and unfolded it. *'Let's see what's happened recently in Atlas.'*

But as Whitley expected, most of the stuff the newspaper exposed what some of the richer businessmen were doing. Yet, he always wondered why the business even bothered doing so since very few people would even have the resources to make any kind of noticeable change. And the ones that did have enough were either part of the problem, like his father, or were more focused on other things, such as Ironwood focusing on the Grimm threat.

'They should probably just give up and focus on other things like those skaters that have been graffitiing all over the place. It would save them a lot of lien from keeping others at bay.' Whitley thought as he continued waiting. *'What else is here? Perhaps there is something actually worth my time reading this.'*

But, as he also expected, there was hardly anything there that even slightly pertained to him. Yet, Whitley knew that reading some of the articles, specifically the ones in the economy section, would prove beneficial. However, most of them were either dull or stuff he already knew due to his statistics tutor. Moving on, Whitley looked through the other sections of the papers, trying to find something interesting, and eventually found himself in the crime section. He began reading through some of the more recent ones. But with each passing article, Whitley began to remember more of his old tutor, Carl Roig.

'I wonder if he found another job as a reporter. If so, I hope he manages to work his way back to how he was before his fall from grace.'

Ding

'Hmm. I wonder who it is.' Whitley thought as he pulled out his scroll. Unlocking it, he noticed that he had received a message from his mother. And judging from how many mistakes there were, he could tell that his mother was drunk... again.

'Whitleu. Di ne a dear and pick ip the maail from the post office, The m ailman fit un An accident and coul dn't feliVer ours. Aldi, do n't forget my wune an d paoer, Kove ypu.'

'How many red signs is it that I can understand drunk text flawlessly? I wonder how much effort it would take to get my mother into an AA meeting.' Whitley thought as he answered the message before putting away his scroll.

Putting away the paper, Whitley crossed the street once the light changed. He then changed directions and headed to the post office. Thankfully, it was not too far from where he was. After a few minutes, he reached the place. Entering, Whitley looked around briefly before heading to the desks. But before he could say anything, the employees' eyes widened in fear once they saw him. They immediately ran to the back and returned a second later with his family's mail.

'My family's reputation proceeds us.' Whitley thought, smirking as he grabbed the mail.

Walking over to the nearby trash bin, Whitley began sorting through the mail. And as he expected, there was the usual junk mail, promotions, scams, occasional vaguely disguised threats from competitors, 'legally' obtained money from clients and bills. But it was the last one that caught Whitley's attention.

'A letter from Carl Roig? That's... unexpected.' Whitley thought as he opened the letter from his old tutor.

'Dear Whitley.

I know it has been a long time since we have spoken with each other. But I have been busy for a while. To keep it short, I managed to get a position at a new company that gave me a reporting job. And boy was this great. I am finally able to resume pursuing my passion for investigating strange and paranormal stories, just like the ones I told you when I was still your tutor. Hopefully, with all these reports I'm doing, I will be back on top, especially with the story I'm currently following. It is about this infamous street called Fear Street. So many mysteries happened there, like mysterious murders and strange incidents. It is an excellent opportunity that I can't let go to waste. And once I finish investigating it, I will tell you all about it before publishing my findings. Also, since I know you would like to see my new office and catch up on some of my recent reports, you would want to visit. You can do so on the weekends, any time from nine to eight, as that's when I would be in my office. Just make sure your father doesn't know about it. Below is the address. See you soon.

From Carl Roig'

'Well, this was a pleasant surprise.' Whitley thought, smiling. Looking up at the clock, he saw that it was nearing 1900. *'It is Saturday. And the place isn't that far. I should drop in on him. I'm sure he would not mind.'*

Knowing his parents would not care, especially since his father loved money more than him and his mother was drunk, Whitley decided to go visit his former tutor and friend. With his mind made up, he put away the mail and kept Carl's letter before exiting the post office and heading to the place.

Twenty Minutes Later

'Alright. Amaris's Underground Reporting. Not... the time I would have gone with. Maybe that owner missed the class about creating a catching name and not a... bad one.' Whitley thought as he looked at the ten-story building.

Shrugging, Whitley entered the building and noticed that a lot of the employees were already packing up and leaving for the day. But he paid them no mind as it was near closing time. Walking over to the directory, Whitley scanned through the names and soon found Carl's office. It was on the eighth floor. Looking back at the front desk, Whitley noticed that the employees were absent from their posts. Seeing this as his opportunity, Whitley quickly maneuvered himself past all the exhausted employees and toward the elevator. Seeing one open, he entered and promptly pressed the right button before pressing the other that closed the doors. After a couple of minutes, the elevator reached the correct floor, with Whitley stepping out a second later.

"Okay. Carl's office was number 869. That means it should be a corner room."

Spotting some signs on the wall, Whitley went to them and looked them over. Spotting the correct one near the bottom, Whitley turned around and began heading south. As he walked down the halls, he made note of how most of the offices and doors seemed bland and uninspiring, which is how it was supposed to be. After all, it was a workplace, not a *fun* place. However, there was one thing that bugged Whitley the longer he was there.

'Why is it so deathly quiet? And why does it smell so heavily of disinfectant?'

Looking around the halls, at the doors, and the floors, Whitley noticed the stark contrast between some areas. Some spots seemed so scrubbed that they seemed brand new. But others seemed like they were due for a cleaning. While some might say it was the cleaning staff not being thorough, Whitley would disagree. It all seemed off.

'But then again, that could just be me. Perhaps an... accident happened, and they needed to ensure that there were no traces of it remaining. Still, that doesn't explain why it is so quiet.'

Pushing those thoughts to the side, Whitley continued down the hallway. After a turn and another few moments, he finally reached Carl's office. Composing himself, Whitley knocked on the door a few times and waited for a response. But none came. Figuring Carl didn't hear him, he knocked again. But again, no response. Annoyed, Whitley raised his fist and knocked with some extra strength behind it. But to his surprise, it caused the door to swing open slightly. Raising an eyebrow, Whitley grabbed the handle and pushed it open a bit more.

"Carl Roig? Are you here? It is me, Whitley Schnee. Your former student." Whitley said in a raised voice as he peeked inside the room.

Seeing nobody inside, Whitley opened the door fully before stepping inside. Noticing some doors on the other side of the room, he figured that Carl was simply using the bathroom and should be out in a moment. Closing the door behind him, Whitley went over to the nearby bookcase to look over the books while he waited.

'Let's see. What do we have here?' Whitley thought as he reviewed the books.

Looking over the collection, Whitley saw that Carl had a multitude of varying book genres in his office. Some were self-help books, while others were all about surviving hostile environments. There was a whole row on one bookcase that was dedicated to survival. Next to them were books about how to blend into the background of wherever you were. And right above them were guides about the various cultures of each of the four kingdoms. However, it was the books at the far end that caught Whitley's interest the most.

'What do we have here?' Whitley thought, moving to the very last bookcase.

Looking up and down, Whitley smiled at seeing the numerous books that contained all of Carl's previous adventures. Some he recognized as the same ones Carl told him when he was his tutor. The rest were

ones he did not recognize. But the names alone got him curious about what they were. However, he noticed that some of Carl's more exciting adventures were missing.

'Possibly at his place. Carl might just want to go over them before combining them into an anthology of sorts.' Whitley thought as he pulled out some books. Even though he knows pretty much how everything went down to the last detail, Whitley still wanted to reread some of them. *'Hopefully, Carl lets me borrow them for a while.'*

Walking over to a nearby chair, Whtiley sat down and started reading through one of the books to pass the time until Carl returned.

Ten Minutes Later

'Okay. What is taking Carl so long? I doubt he left already.' Whitley thought, slightly annoyed. But he was also slightly worried as Carl could simply be suffering from food poisoning. And from his past experiences, that was not fun.

Getting up, Whitley went over to the bathroom and knocked on the door. But to his surprise, it creaked open once he did. Surprised, Whitley opened up the door entirely before stepping inside the bathroom. Yet, he became confused when he saw that no one was in there and that it was mostly spotless. But... it seemed almost too spotless, with the dirty areas looking intentionally placed. It was almost as if someone was trying to remove any evidence that anyone or anything was ever here while making it look like it was still in use. Everything just seemed off.

'Come to think of it. The hallways were exactly like this. And the room itself.' Whitley thought, looking back at the office and noticing how it was spotless yet made to look like a faunus worked here.

Stepping out of the bathroom, Whitley looked around the room again and saw a computer on Carl's desk. Thinking he could find some answers there, Whitley walked over to it, pulled back the chair, and

sat down before moving up. He then turned on the computer, only to groan when it was password protected.

'Okay. Think, Whitley. What could that old goat faunus have put as his password?'

Bringing his hand up and cupping his chin, Whitley racked his brain to try and figure out what the password was. Looking around the room, he tried to find any clue about what the password could be. Yet, he came up with nothing. For the next couple of moments, Whitley tried to recall everything he knew about his old tutor that might give him the hint he needed.

'What could it be?' Whitley wondered. However, he stopped when his hand felt a metal plating right under one of the drawers. Moving back slightly, Whitley bends down to get a better look at it. But he was confused by what he saw. *'Okay. A gold plating with the numbers 68, 129, 41, 55, 69, and 11. But what could it mean?'*

While random, Whitley felt like the numbers were the key to finding the computer's password. However, he had no idea what they were referencing. They could be anything. Looking around the room, nothing stood out or made Whitley think they could be what the numbers were referencing. The only things that could possibly be the answer were the books.

'Might as well begin with them.'

Getting up, Whitley went around the room and collected the books that had one of the numbers on them or seemed related in some way or another. After a few minutes, he returned to the desk and laid all the books out with the front covers facing up. Whitley then began going through all of them, removing any that didn't fit while keeping the ones that did.

'Okay. That is eight books remaining. They are The Unknown and Unsolved Remains, Hidden All Along in the Darkness, The Puzzles of Life, Shadows Covering What We Seek, Thinking about What We

Want to Solve, Venturing Into the Unknown, Better Left Undiscovered, and Are You Afraid of the Dark.'

Looking them over, Whitley let out a slight groan at how mundane and generic the titles are. But more so because they told him nothing about what the password was. Briefly, Whitley thought the numbers were hinting at a specific word in a specific line in a specific chapter that's within a particular book. However, that wouldn't make sense, as a simple mixup would make the numbers worthless. And while he could label them, it would make it too obvious, thus defeating the purpose.

'So, what is it?' Whitley thought as he looked over the books.

Taking a look at the spines, Whitley saw that each of the books had different authors. For a moment, he thought they simply worked together on these books before claiming one as their own, but a quick online search debunked that theory as the authors lived years apart. Thinking they were related in some other way, Whitley returned to the titles and tried to see if he could find some common ground in them.

'Alright. Think, Whitley. What could they possibly have in common?' Whitley thought as he examined the titles. *'Some are about things in the dark. Some are about unknown things that we seek answers to. And some are about... no.'*

Turning back to the computer, Whitley turned it on again and typed in the password.

A_Mystery

Password Accepted

'That was just... wow. Carl definitely needs a better password.' Whitley thought as he accessed the computer.

But instead of digging in right away, Whitley sat back and thought for a moment about where he should start. He knew he couldn't just go through everything as he didn't have the time. The building would be closing soon. After a few more moments, Whitley decided to start with Carl's journal entries.

'Okay. Got the journals. Thankfully, there were no passwords. Let's see what we have here.' Whitley thought as he started with one of the earlier entries.

'Journal Entry 356

Date: August 15, 3051

Alright. This is my second month on Fear Street. So far, nothing seems out of the ordinary, which is strange considering how hard it was to find the place or anything relating to this place outside of those stories. But that just makes it all the exciting. Who knows what other stories lay hidden underneath this almost normal visage? I just hope I don't run into any trouble. But if I do, at least I have that lasgun weapon I got from that nice huntress I met a while back. Hopefully, I don't blast my own face off since she did say it was a rifle that shot lasers and could turn into a club. Granted, all rifles can be clubs in some way. Oh well.'

'Wait. August 15, 3051? That was over a year ago! Hang on.' Whitley thought as he pulled out the letter from Carl. Opening it, he scanned it from top to bottom and found the date. And to his surprise, it was written on April 12, 3051. *'Yeah. He wrote the letter over a year ago. Why am I just receiving it? Hopefully, the next journal entry will shed some light.'*

'Journal Entry 357

Date: September 9, 3051

Okay. I finally found the name of this town. It's called Shadyside. And boy, does the name fit. When I first arrived here two months ago, I had an odd feeling that there was more than meets the eye here. I know that can be applied to almost anything. But I feel like there is a literal flip side to everything here. It was as if everything was wearing a disguise. Then again, that could just be because I am an outsider. And they don't want anything to do with me outside of answering some questions and friendly greetings. But I still haven't found anything that could hint where these murders and paranormal activities have occurred. Every lead I followed has only led to a dead end. Yet, as any reporter would know, that just means I am getting close. Hopefully, I will have a real lead soon. But only time will tell.'

'Alright. Nothing out of the ordinary there, aside from the date. Still, at least he's found the place.' Whitley thought as he closed the journal entry before opening up the next one.

'Journal Entry 369

Date: November 19, 3051

Alright. I just finished wrapping up my first story. It was... not as exciting as I first thought. What started out as a simple prank call between two teens soon turned deadly when one of the teen's half-brother blackmailed them to join in on the prank calls and accidentally called a shady individual. While I don't have all the details on Mr. Farberson yet, I managed to find out that he had numerous scandals, Ponzi schemes, under-the-table dealings, and even a few murders. But, due to the incompetency of the Shadytown's police system, he was never caught for some of his crimes and even released on the few times he was arrested. But back to it. During the prank call, they heard what sounded like someone being murdered. And against all common sense, the three teens decided to trace the call and see for themselves what was happening. However, they soon realize that what they heard was correct. They did hear

someone getting murdered. It was Mr. Farberson killing his wife with a knife. Luckily, when they were there, Mr. Farberson wasn't. So, they could have gotten away. Yet, their stupidity was their downfall as the half-brother picked up the knife, getting his fingerprints on the murder weapon. Mr. Farberson, actually using his brain, seized on the opportunity to shift the blame to them by tracking the teens to their home and calling the police on them. Yet, only a few days later, they were released. Knowing they could be his downfall, Mr. Farberson tracked them down to try and kill them with his trusty chainsaw but was stopped by the police, who arrested him. Again, not that interesting compared to some of the other stories I have seen. Still, a story is a story.'

'Huh. That's weird. Carl's previous entry was 357, while this one was 369. Where are the others? Maybe they are on his home computer?' Whitley wondered as he moved on to the next entry.

'Journal Entry 375

Date: December 2, 3051

Maybe I should move here? More friendly people and not damn ass cold as Atlas. But that does not matter right now. What matters is that I am finally hot on the tail of a paranormal activity. From what little I could gather, the reality we are in is not the only reality. There are other versions of us, living very similar or entirely different lives, each with their own twist. And there are ways to cross into them or change our reality into a different one. However, it is extraordinarily challenging to even attempt to do so. But it is possible. Again, from what little I could find, Matthew Amsterdam was the first person to do this. Yet, he also realized that there was an organization whose sole purpose was to prevent this. That won't stop me, though. I will discover and report on this. I just wish Whitley was here with me. He would have loved this. He still hasn't answered my letter yet. I want to believe that the post office hasn't delivered my letter yet. But it's more likely that his father tore it up once he

saw that it was from me. After all, he only hired me to be Whitley's tutor since I was doing it for dirt cheap. And he fired me not even a second after the last session ended. Oh well. Maybe we can do one in Atlas after I return.'

'The post office was the reason why I didn't receive your letter, Carl. But why did it take them over a year to give it to me? Why is there another gap between your entries? And reality warping? That seems a bit far-fetched. But then again, Carl has shown me proof of his other paranormal activities. Wait? Can this even be considered that? Is that why there are missing entries? Maybe the next one will tell me something. Could someone be covering whatever you are doing up?'

'Journal Entry 669

Date: May 1, 3052

I am really glad Whitley is not here with me. This is proving far more dangerous than I could have ever imagined. Since I first got here, I felt like someone was following me. But I brushed it off as this was common for me for a variety of reasons. Yet, last month, they slipped up, and I caught them. Now, they have abandoned all stealth and are now just outright chasing me. I only barely managed to escape each time. And to make things worse, I think they have been cutting off all the entries I have been sending back to my office computer in Atlas. I thought about trying to send a message to the world to expose them or something. But I don't recognize anything about them. They are wearing Atlas Standard Uniforms, but they could have gotten them from anywhere. Not to mention, they have a lot of strange insignia that I have never seen before. I tried escaping, but something was preventing me from getting anywhere. I am stuck here. Luckily, I can still send messages back to Atlas with only a slim chance of the messages making it. Hopefully, someone finds them. And if that person is brave enough and also wants to find the truth, they can continue my work. They can report on everything about Fear Street while evading the group that has been trying to capture me. If whoever is reading

this, look under my sliding office desk at Kerensky's Reporters Emporium. There is a code. They relate to my love for fictional historical books. There, you can find everything you need. After all, it all starts with a new desk.'

'Wait. Was Carl kidnapped?' Whitley thought, worried for his... friend. *'What should I do? I doubt I can get the police's help. And this seems like a special group after him, so they probably made sure that they can't be traced as easily. Not to mention, this entry happened two years ago. I doubt anyone would be willing to help at this point, especially since Carl is a Faunus.'*

But then, a thought came to Whitley. A very risky one.

'Maybe I could help him?'

It would undoubtedly be a long shot and extremely dangerous. But it was better than nothing. Plus, there were books here about survival and how to blend into a different culture. Not to mention, even though it has been a few years, Whitley still remembers those few lessons about stealth that Winter taught him. So, there was a chance he might succeed in rescuing Carl or, at the very least, finish his report and possibly expose those who kidnapped him.

'But where to start? And how would I even get there?' Whitley wondered.

Turning back to the entry, Whitley looked at the bottom and reread the instructions Carl left. But what stood out immediately was the code and how it *'related'* to fictional history books.

'Carl hated fiction history. He hated anything fictional. He always preferred the truth and reality. Hell, that's one of the reasons why he became a reporter. So, it's obvious he did that to throw off some people. Plus, Kerensky's Reporters Emporium was where he was fired from last time, and while he did have a desk there, it was destroyed during an accident while he was still employed. And he

didn't receive his new one, as he was fired shortly after. So, where could this new code be?'

Leaning back into the chair, Whitley began to think about all the places the code could be. He doubted it would be at Carl's house since that would be too obvious. Plus, whoever captured him would have searched the place like they did here. But as he looked over the entry, an idea came to mind. Getting up, Whitley walked over to the bookshelves and searched for one book in particular. After a few moments, he found it.

'Here it is. The Haunting of the Desks: A Sparks & Bainbridge Short Story. A story about how paranormal activities started when Sparks and Bainbridge got a new desk for their office.' Whitley thought as he looked at the book. *'But why did he make that remark about historical fiction? The only historical part of this book is how it takes place a while ago. Maybe to confuse others? I don't know. But at least I have it. Now, I just need to find the code.'*

Heading back to the desk, Whitley began to look all over for anything that could resemble the code. However, aside from the numbers on the plating, which he highly doubted was the one, there was nothing else. Whitley even looked for parts that seemed out of place, parts that seemed newer than others, or areas that seemed a bit more worn than others. Yet, after ten minutes, he came up with nothing.

'I have to find the code soon. It's almost closing time, and security will soon be checking the building for any stragglers.' Whitley thought as he took a moment to think.

However, as Whitley sat back on the chair, he heard a light 'clunk' when his foot tapped against the desk near the bottom drawer. Raising an eyebrow, he got up and pulled out the drawer but saw nothing out of the ordinary. Yet, he knew something had to have caused that noise. Kneeling, he pulled the drawer all the way out of the desk and saw that one of the railings was loose. Curious, Whitley reached in to examine it and realized that it had been glued there. And due to how often Carl must have used the drawer, it started to

come loose. Grabbing it, Whitley gave it a few tugs. And after the third one, he finally got it out.

'There we are. Now, let's see what the code is.' Whitley thought as he stood up. But before he could check it, he heard footsteps outside the room. Luckily, they disappeared a second later, causing Whitley to let out a breath he didn't know he was holding. *'Okay. That was fortunate. But I should leave. I'm already pushing my luck. And even though it has been a few years, I'm pretty sure that group might return to see if they have missed anything.'*

Grabbing the drawer, Whitley reinserted it into the desk before making sure it looked the way it did before he arrived. Seeing a flash drive, Whitley inserted it into the computer and downloaded all the entries to it so he could use them for future reference. He then quickly scanned through the documents to see if there was anything else that could come in handy, yet he came up with nothing. Pulling out the flash drive, Whitley turned off the computer before grabbing his bags. However, before exiting the room, he looked around and picked out some books that would definitely come in handy later on. Once he felt satisfied with everything, Whitley left the room and eventually the building. Luckily, aside from a half-asleep janitor, no one saw him.

One Hour Later

Local Atlas Cafe

'Okay. I hope whoever invented the Playfair Cipher is burning in the afterlife.' Whitley thought, annoyed.

After leaving the building, Whitley decided to head to a cafe that was a little out of the way. While not the best, it would certainly do and let him continue cracking the code in peace. However, he was close to banging his head against the table in frustration. After sitting down and taking out the book, Whitley grabbed the piece of wood and examined it for the code. But to his surprise, it was a container with numerous pieces of paper inside. Unfolding them, Whitley became

confused when he saw that they were some Playfair Cipher puzzles and not a code. Yet, realization soon dawned on him as the Playfair Cipher puzzle was the code to find out where to look in the book, which would then take him to the place that Carl wanted him to go. With a reluctant sigh, Whitley began deciphering the Playfair Ciphers. And he has been on it for the past forty minutes.

'At least I don't have to worry about anyone searching for me. Jacques might see me as the heir to his kingdom, but I know he would not bat an eye if I became lost. Winter is in the military and hardly ever shows her face, while Weiss is in Vale. As for my mother... well... she's probably already passed out drunk. And I doubt that would change once I leave for Fear Street in Shadyside.' Whitley thought as he took a sip of his drink.

Sighing, he focused back on the Playfair Ciphers. While complicated, they were nothing that he could not crack with enough time. After all, the primary reason they were difficult was because they were meant to cause as much confusion as possible to the person trying to solve them. After about another twenty minutes, Whitley finally managed to crack the ciphers.

'Alright. That's done. Now let's see what I have.' Whitley thought as he spread the papers. But to his annoyance, all that was on the papers were a series of numbers. While meaningless to most, Whitley instantly recognized them as part of Carl's favorite types of puzzles. *'Alright. Now it's time for an Ottendorf Cipher. I should order some tea.'*

Fifteen Minutes Later

"Finally." Whitley said as he set down his pen before rubbing his face. Grabbing his tea, he took a sip before looking at the papers. "Okay. So, cracking the Ottendorf Cipher gave me this riddle. Low on the totem and bordering the deep periphery. Held together by a pin, but the inside is what matters. Ordinary is best for fonts but not for living. The cornerstones of life are the birth of an idea."

Setting down the papers, Whitley began to rack his brain for what the riddle could possibly mean. Sighing, he decided to go line by line. Taking out his scroll, he pulled up a map of the town he was in so he could narrow down the locations as he went through the riddle. The first line was rather obvious. Whitley knew that periphery meant the outer edge of something. And since it was combined with deep, Whitley surmised that it meant on the outer edge of the outer edge. So, he eliminated most of the town so that only the outer edge remained.

The next part, low on the totem, could fool almost anybody. However, Whitley remembered how the order of totems typically didn't hold any significance. But he knew Carl was not referring to what totems usually represent. He was talking about a person's wealth or social status. And either way, Whitley knew he was talking about the lower end of the social class. So that meant he could all but one section of the map.

'Alright. So I know where to go. The rest is what the house looks like and the streets.' Whitley thought as he got up and paid for his drinks. *'Held together by a pin but the inside is what matters means that the house is falling apart on the outside while the inside is nice and cozy. As for the font part, that means the lawn is bland and would not attract anyone's attention. But what about the streets?'*

One Hour Later

'Millions of lien to spare, and they can't make public transportation decent.' Whitley thought as he got off the bus. Looking around, he spotted the street sign of Cradol Road.

After looking over the riddle, Whitley figured that the 'cornerstone' mention must have meant the intersection of the street. However, the names took a bit to figure out. He had to go through several sites before stumbling upon some trivia of how the idea of the Atlas Kingdom was devised on this very street. And as the plan started to come to fruition, the people decided to give the street they were on when they thought about it the name of Cradol. While there was no

direct translation in the Atlas language, Whitley learned how the people who thought about it were originally from Mistral. And in Mistral, the word Cradol could be roughly translated to cradle, which means birth.

However, that left the name of the other street. While Whitley figured cornerstone meant intersection and birth/idea referenced Cradol, he had no idea what the other street could be. All that was left in that part of the riddle was the word life. And that was too vague. There were so many different ways he could interpret it. So, Whitley decided to go the literal route and find the street with a name that could even remotely mean life or anything pertaining to it. After a couple of minutes of looking through Dustmaps, Whitley learned the closest match was a street named Neuanfang, which was Atlesian for Fresh Start. And a new life was, in a sense, a fresh start.

'Hopefully, I am correct.' Whitley thought as he walked to his destination. Thankfully, despite the broken moon already in the sky, he had no problem seeing what was in front of him because of all the street lamps.

Five Minutes Later

'Okay. This looks like the place.' Whitley thought as he arrived at what he hoped was the correct destination.

Looking up from the papers, Whitley saw a run-down-looking one-story single-family house with an attic. The paint was peeling off, and the gutters were barely hanging on. A strong wind would send them crumbling to the ground. The walls were stained with graffiti, and some of the windows were boarded up. The front porch was missing the boards on the second step. The metal railing looked like it would turn to dust at the slightest touch from how rusty it was. There were about forty newspapers right in front of the door. Just from the front, one would say it was a miracle how the house was still standing.

The lawn was in a similar shape to the house, albeit for a different reason. While the house seemed to have started to fall apart from

deliberate neglect, the front lawn was a desolate wasteland from not having anyone to care for it. The grass was nonexistent, and the dead remains of the roots of bushes littered the soil. There were animal deposits scattered all over. The soil itself seemed incapable of helping sustain any more life. Yet, despite all this, it only helped make the house blend into the scenery more and not stick out. Granted, that must have been the idea Carl had when he was still around.

"Alright. Time to check it out."

Swallowing any nerves, Whitley walked up the pathway, up the porch, and toward the door. Grabbing the knob, he was not surprised to see that it was locked. Yet, a glint from the corner of his eye told Whitley that the spare key was underneath a now poorly concealed spot in the floor. Kneeling, he pulled away the loose floorboard and grabbed the key before standing back up and unlocking the door.

CRREEEEEEKKKKK

'That was loud. The hinges could use some oil.' Whitley thought as he grabbed his stuff.

Entering the home, Whitley closed the door before taking in his surroundings. And he was genuinely surprised to see that it was cozy. There was everything one would need to have a comfortable time here as if it were a vacation home. It certainly was a stark contrast to how the outside looked like. And if it weren't for the thick layer of dust covering the furniture, Whitley would have thought that someone was living here and had been here recently.

"Now. Where would Carl want me to check?" Whitley asked as he looked around.

After a moment, Whitley shrugged before starting from the bottom to the top. Spotting some stairs nearby, Whitley went over to them and climbed down to the basement. Looking around, Whitley saw a bed, a closet, a minifridge, and a night table with a few knick-knacks on it.

But Whitley knew that while ordinary-looking, the stuff he needed to find could be in this room. Walking over to the bed, he threw off the sheets before removing the pillowcases. Seeing nothing, Whitley threw everything off before lifting the bed, only to see used receipts. Looking through them, Whitley realized that they were only food receipts. And that Carl had an unhealthy addiction to Fresh Veggie Peta Pockets.

Seeing nothing of importance and doubting anything would be inside the mattress, Whitley set everything back to how it was to make it seem like nothing was out of place. He then moved to the closet, opened it, and looked through all the coats, sweaters, and jackets. But aside from some lint and tissues, there was nothing in their pockets. Whitley then removed all of them and placed them on the bed to see if the closet itself had any secret compartments or clues. Yet, the result was the same.

Rolling his eyes, Whitley put the clothes back in the closet before checking the knick-knacks. But, like with the closet and bed, none of them held any significance. However, Whitley did put the small statue of a lamp into one of his bags. While nothing seemed off about it, it was the only one that still had its price sticker and bar code on it, while the others had theirs ripped off.

After making sure everything was in the same place as when he arrived, Whitley made his way back upstairs to the main floor. He then headed to the kitchen. However, he did not stay there for more than a couple of minutes as the only things that were there were rotten and beyond expired food that gave off a pungent odor. It was so bad that Whitley was sure even people who were used to working with bad smells could not stay there for more than a couple of minutes. And speaking of bad odors, he doubted the bathroom would hold anything significant.

"I guess that just leaves the attic."

Looking around, Whitley tried to find the stairs that would take him there. But after a moment, he saw that the only way up to the attic

was through a trap door in the ceiling. Grabbing a chair from the kitchen, he brought it back to the living room and placed it right underneath the trap door. Stepping onto the chair, Whitley reached up, grabbed the string, and opened the trap door with a ladder unfolding itself a second later. Luckily, the chair and Whitley were just out of the way, so they didn't get hit. Getting off, Whitley returned the chair to the kitchen before going back and climbing the ladder to the attic.

'It looks like Carl renovated the attic to be his office.' Whitley thought as he looked around.

The walls were insulated, and the floors were carpeted. While there was only one window; it was a bay window with a nice setup that consisted of a chair, a lamp, and a small nightstand next to it. However, the window seemed like it was about to fall apart from neglect, the elements battering it, and the holes that were caused by rocks being thrown at it.

On the other side of the attic were three bookcases. But unlike the ones at Carl's office, these had encyclopedias, dictionaries, language translation books, some how-to guides, a couple of books about cultural anthropology, and several journals that must keep records of everything Carl thought was essential to write down. And toward the end was a work desk with a computer caked in dust and dirt. Yet, despite that, it seemed to be in working condition.

'Hopefully, the password is much easier this time.' Whitley thought as he moved to sit in the chair behind the desk.

Pulling himself closer, he pressed the button on the monitor, with the computer booting to life a second later. Thankfully, this time, he didn't need to crack a puzzle as the password was on a sticky note in the drawer. However, he was unsure if the computer was already combed through or if someone else had put the password there as a reminder.

'Better make this quick then before whoever did this comes back.'

Getting to work, Whitley began searching through Carl's computer for anything about Fear Street, Shadyside, or anything that could point him in the right direction. However, after nearly twenty minutes, Whitley found nothing. Aside from some mentions about Fear Street and some possible future cases, there wasn't anything he could go off, much less directions about how to continue Carl's work.

'Maybe he didn't leave it on his computer. Perhaps it is in one of his journals. Still, I should write down-'

Jiggle

CREAK

Thunk

'SHIT!' Whitley thought as he heard muffled voices from downstairs. And judging from how heavy the footsteps were and what he could make out from their conversation, he knew they were probably here to erase all that was left of Fear Street on Carl's computer. More importantly, Whitley doubted they would be thrilled or take too kindly to him on Carl's computer. Plus, he was positive he would be unable to trick them.

"I got to get out of here."

Getting up, he turned off the computer before grabbing his stuff. Looking around the attic, Whitley figured his best and probably only course of action was to exit through the window and book it as quickly as possible to safety. However, no sooner than he took his first step, someone pulled him back.

"MMM!" Whitley tried to get out, but whoever grabbed him had also covered his mouth with their hand. And as he tried to break free, his assailant pulled him into a room that he didn't see when he first looked around. Then, the assailant moved a fake wall back into place. But as they did, Whitley managed to break free from their grip.

However, he became shocked and confused when he realized it was Klein. "Klein? What are you doing here?"

"Shhh!" Klein said, lifting his finger to his mouth and making a shushing motion before nodding back to the room.

Getting the hint, Whitley squinted into one of the small holes in the wall to see into the other room. Nothing happened for a second, but that changed when three figures wearing Atlas Standard Uniforms entered the room. However, as Carl said in his entry, there were many strange insignia on their uniforms, none of which he recognized. While Winter might know one or two, he doubted she would know the others.

Still watching, Whitley and Klein saw the figures make their way to the computer. They then placed some cases on the desk before opening them. One took out a strange device and used it to scan the room. Briefly, they thought they were going to get caught because of it, but they relaxed when the figure nodded before putting it away. Another figure turned on the computer before placing a flash drive into the port. At first, nothing happened, but that quickly changed as the computer started humming while the screen rapidly changed. After a few seconds, a notice popped up, but from this angle, Whitley and Klein couldn't make out what it said. But they had an inkling that it was a message box saying that all the information on the computer had been deleted or downloaded.

Meanwhile, the third figure went around the room, collecting nearly all the books in the bookcases and replacing them with others. From what they could see, Whitley and Klein noticed that the new books were the kind one might find in a math teacher's office. After a couple of minutes, the figure was done with replacing the books. All the figures then grouped up and nodded at each other before exiting the attic. Whitley and Klein waited until they heard the front door close, followed shortly by the sounds of a van speeding off. And even then, they waited a few more seconds before finally exiting the secret room.

"That was close." Klein said, relieved that they weren't caught.

"Yeah. But why are you here, Klein? I thought you had left already?" Whitley asked, curious.

"My flight got delayed until tomorrow at noon. So, to pass the time, I decided to visit an old friend." Klein answered.

"You mean Carl Roig?"

"Your old tutor, yes. You didn't know it, but Carl and I were close friends. We go way back. Unfortunately, we lost contact a little more than a year ago. I wasn't sure what caused it. But I decided that before I left, I would try and visit him one last time. However, as you already know, he is missing."

"Yeah, because I read his entries at his new work. But how do you know about this place, Klein? I only know about this place because of a code he left."

"When you know someone for a long time and are good friends with them, you start to pick up on little things about them, things others would never notice. Despite these figures' best efforts to make it look like Carl was simply on vacation, I instantly knew something was off. So, I decided to see if I could find him at his work or other places he likes to hang out. Eventually, I remembered about this place and came to see if this group had already swept it. Luckily, it seems we managed to beat them here."

"Too bad it seems like they erased everything." Whitley said, disappointed.

"Or so they think." Klein said before raising a flash drive and a bag.

"What's that?" Whitley asked, sounding hopeful.

"I got here about two hours ago. And I knew those people would probably erase everything here. So, I made a copy of everything on

Carl's computer and replaced his journals with other fake books. We can now know what he was doing."

"I already do know what Carl was doing. Well, mostly."

"Really?" Klein asked.

"Yes. In Carl's office, I managed to crack the clue he left behind in case he forgot his password. From there, I read his entries to see if I could find why everything felt amiss. After a couple of entries, I discovered that he was investigating a place called Fear Street in a town called Shadyvile. Everything seemed to be normal at first, aside from the date. But that changed during his last entry."

"What did it say?"

"That he was being chased by this group wearing these exact uniforms. He tried escaping, but something was preventing him from doing so. Carl also thinks that they were the ones who were stopping his entries from returning to his computer. They had been apparently stalking him for a while, but he only realized this when they slipped up. And when they realized this, they abandoned all stealth and began just chasing him." Whitley explained while purposely leaving out the part of Carl wanting someone to continue his work and that he would be the one doing so.

"Hmm. So it seems that whoever they are, they don't want whatever is happening at Shadyvile or Fear Street to be known by the public." Klein said, raising an eyebrow.

"It seems like it. But what should we do?"

"I'm not sure if we can do anything. But we should probably tell Ironwood about this."

"Why?"

"If they are actually part of Atlas, then we have nothing to worry about. We might even be able to convince Ironwood to release Carl or return him. If not, then it would still be wise to tell Ironwood, as that would mean that a group had infiltrated Atlas."

"True." Whitley agreed. While he would prefer to have as few people know about this as possible to avoid future headaches, he knew that if this group did not belong to Atlas, then they had a big problem on their hands. "But how are we even going to meet with Ironwood? I doubt he is taking visitors."

"Especially so late. But if there is one thing I know about that man, it is that he rarely ever fully sleeps. He stays away through micro naps and lots of strong coffee."

"Okay. So he might still be up, but how are we going to see him?"

"I still have a few favors to trade in." Klein answered as he put on his hat. "Come on. Let's get going before the group figures out that the journals they took were fakes."

"Right. Coming." Whitley said as Klein opened the trap door before hastily climbing down.

However, before he could follow, Whitley spotted something from the corner of his eye that seemed a bit out of place. Walking over to it, he realized that it was another fake door. Curious, Whitley grabbed the edges and managed to move the door to the side after a bit of a struggle. And what he saw surprised him.

'So this must be where he kept records of all the stories he published.' Whitley thought as he saw numerous books, journals, and newspaper articles about events that Carl had reported on.

But as tempting as it was to look through them, Whitley knew he didn't have time. He had to hurry if he wanted to have a chance at saving Carl. Not to mention, Klein was probably getting impatient downstairs. Yet, that didn't mean he couldn't come back to read them

once he was done finishing what Carl started. However, for that to happen, the papers had to still be here. Stepping back, Whitley was about to grab the door but stopped when he noticed a folder with a label of 'unpublished stories.' Going over to it, Whitley grabbed the folder and went through it. And true to the label, none of these stories were ever published, which was kind of sad as some of them seemed rather interesting.

'But maybe they can be published.' Whitley thought.

Even though it didn't say in the entry, Whitley was confident that Carl would appreciate it if he finished his other stories and had them published as well. However, that idea made Whitley realize something. If he were going to go through with this, he would need something so he would not be recognized. While a dark hoodie would work in covering his body, Whitley also knew he needed something that would cover his face. Luckily, he didn't need to think too hard about where to get one as he spotted a digital face mask on a table. And it seemed to still be functional and just needs new batteries.

'This will work.' Whitley thought as he moved the door back into place before heading downstairs.

Midnight

'I really need some stronger coffee.' General Ironwood thought as he sat at his desk and went through some paperwork. *'And a vacation.'*

DING

"Yes. What is it?" Ironwood asked, answering the call that was coming from his table's scroll.

'General Ironwood. You have two visitors.'

"Visitors?" Ironwood asked, confused. Looking at the clock on his wall, he saw that it was a little past midnight. While he did

occasionally have visitors, they hardly ever came this late. Plus, the ones who usually even consider visiting him were not even in Atlas. The closest one would be Specialist Schnee, and she is currently heading to Vale to visit her sister.

'Yes, sir. Visitors.'

"What do they want?"

'They said that they need to speak with you about something important. And the one that seems in charge is saying that you owe him a few favors from long ago that he is cashing in.'

'Favors I owe?' Ironwood thought, confused. While he knew he owed some people some things, none came to mind that could possibly be visiting now. "Send them in."

'Will do, sir.'

'Let's see who my visitors are.' Ironwood thought as he readied himself. But he became internally surprised when he saw Whitley Schnee and Klein Sieben enter his office. *'I certainly wasn't expecting them.'*

"Hello, General Ironwood. I trust that you are doing well." Klein said.

"Good to see you, Klein. And I am. But I am a little tired from all this paperwork." Ironwood answered before turning to Whitely. "Mr. Schnee. How are you?"

"I am fine, Ironwood." Whitley said, causing Ironwood to nod.

"So, what is the reason for your visit?"

"Listen, Ironwood. I'm cashing in a few favors for some information." Klein said.

"Alright. But you know I can't give out classified information."

"I know. But I'm not talking about that. We came across something that we felt like we should tell you about."

"What is it?"

"We were at a friend's house, wanting to catch up on a few things. But then, these figures wearing Atlas Standard Uniforms arrived and cleaned out the place. They took his books and replaced them with others, scanned the house for something, and deleted everything on his computer." Whitley answered, surprising Ironwood.

"Do you know what group could have done that?" Klein asked.

"That's, for lack of a better word, a sweeping team. Their objectives can vary depending on the case. But primarily, they are used to erase any memory of the person/group or make it seem like they simply went away on a 'vacation.'" Ironwood answered before gaining a serious look. "But the Atlas Kingdom hasn't used those kinds of teams for over forty years. We outlawed them and implemented laws so that no one could ever form a new team. I even signed the laws myself."

"Well, either someone made a group or a group stole some Atlas Standard Uniforms, 'cause that's what this group did." Klein said.

"Are you sure they were wearing Atlas Standard Uniforms? And did they have any other insignia?"

"Yes. We're sure they were wearing Atlas Standard Uniform."

"And they had several additional insignia on their uniforms. While we could see clearly all of them, we can tell you what four were." Whitley added.

"What are they?" Ironwood asked, turning on his computer and entering his archives of groups under the Atlas Kingdom.

"One was a bone-coloured lightning bolt centered between a pair of wings, a second was two golden keys saltire on a field of light blue, the third was a white, robed, penitent angel of death, holding a longsword pointing downwards by the blade, on a field of black, and the final one was an ebon chalice with a single, black droplet falling into it."

"Hmm. None of those insignia match with anything that's in the database." Ironwood said as he stared at the 'No Match Found' sign on his computer screen. "That means one of two things."

"Which are?" Klein asked.

"The first is that someone here created a group without me knowing to possibly cover up their tracks or tie up loose ends for something big that is about to happen."

"And the second?" Whitley asked.

"That we a have mole or leak in the kingdom. A separate group stole our uniforms with who knows what else and is planning something big but for a different purpose than the first reason."

"So, what should we do?" Klein asked.

"First off, did they see you?"

"No. They didn't see us. It seems like they were so focused on their task or believed that no one else was there that they didn't bother checking."

"Alright. Since that is the case, I would suggest you two to head home and keep your heads low. Stick with those you trust, keep an eye out for anything out of the ordinary, no matter how insignificant it might seem, and keep track of everything and everyone you talk to. You two can't take any chances since there is a possibility they might have seen you two but decided not to do anything." Ironwood said.

"That makes sense. What else?" Whitley asked.

"What was the name of the friend you were visiting?"

"Carl Roig." Klein answered before Whitley could come up with a fake name.

"Alright. I will have one of my people look into his background and see if there is any place left where this group hasn't touched yet and see if we can set up a trap for them there. But as for you two, stay away from anything relating to him. While it might be tough, it's best to stay away so as not to draw attention from this group; otherwise, they might start to think you are onto them."

"Fair."

"But do you think you would be able to find and possibly save Carl if he is still alive?" Whitley asked.

"I can't guarantee you that, Whitley. But we shall try our best." Ironwood answered.

"Thank you."

"Now. Is there anything else we need to discuss?"

"No. That is it."

"Alright. I shall start organizing this in the morning. But as for you two, you should probably head home as it is well past midnight."

"Right. Thank you, Ironwood. Come now, Whitley." Klein said as he and Whitley exited the room while Ironwood returned to his dreaded paperwork.

"Well, that went better than I expected." Whitley said as they were escorted back outside.

"Indeed. Hopefully, Ironwood can find Carl and bring him to safety while dealing with this group."

"Hopefully." Whitley agreed. "But what now?"

"Now, I shall head to a motel to stay the night and then head to the airport later. But you should head home, Whitley." Klein answered as they reached the street. But he then sighed as he turned to face Whitley. "However, I take you won't be home for long."

"That's right." Whitley answered, knowing Klein had already figured out what he was planning.

"You will soon be finding a way to get to Shadyvile and investigate Fear Street to possibly find Carl or continue his work."

"Yes. I don't know when I will leave, but it will be as soon as I gather everything I think I need."

"I also take it that I can't stop you."

"No."

"Alright." Klein sighed, knowing it would be futile to try and stop Whitley. And felt annoyed that he couldn't try and get anyone else to talk some sense into him. Jacques couldn't care less, and Willow was probably passed out from her drinking. And Winter was heading to Vale and already had her hands full. "Just be careful, Whitley. We don't fully know what's going on. Not to mention, we don't know how Shadyville is."

"True. But from the files that you downloaded and some of the books I took from Carl's office, I should be able to be ready for almost anything and blend into the town." Whitley answered as he showed Klein some books. "I also got this digital mask so no one will know it is me."

"At least you will be somewhat prepared. And good thinking about the mask. Just please, be careful." Klein sighed. "And once you get there, try and set yourself up with a place you can go to to be safe. Also, once you're able to, send me instructions on how to get there. That way, I can help you whenever I get the chance."

"You're willing to help me, Klein?" Whitley asked, surprised.

"As much as I can. I still have other things to do."

"Thank you, Klein."

"You're welcome, Whitley. And good luck." Klein said before leaving. As he watched him go, Whitley felt relieved that he would at least have some help, who was also familiar. However, he still had a lot on his plate before he could go to Fear Street, like finding out where it was.

'It can wait until tomorrow. Right now, I should head home and get some sleep.' Whitley thought before heading home.

Notes:

Request from brave kid.